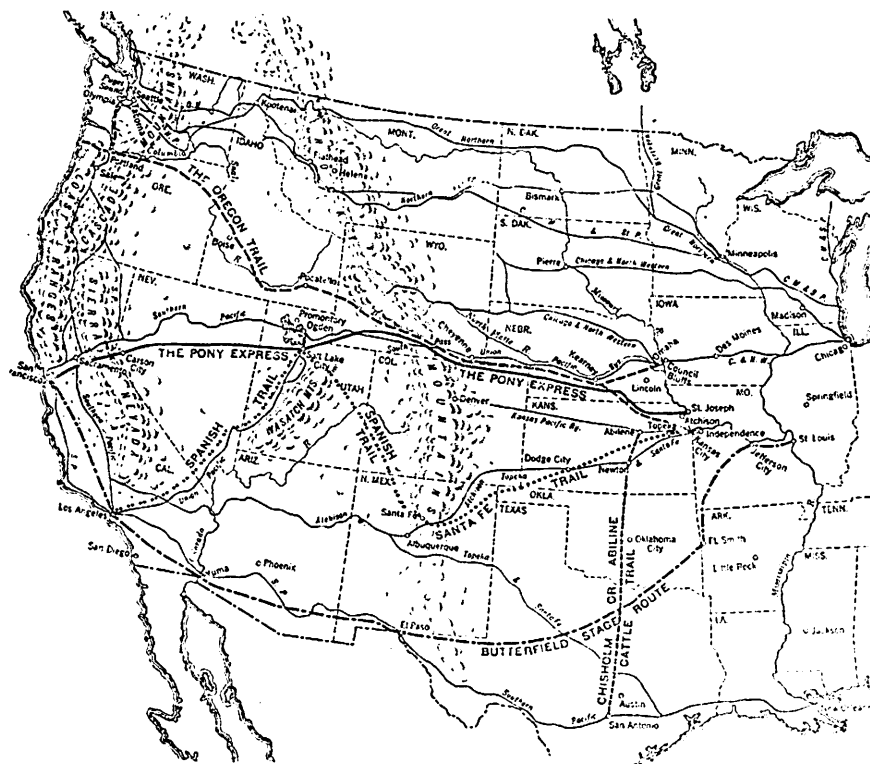


tions in charge labored to such good purpose that sixty days after they were set afoot it was ready for active operations."



In 1860 there were nearly one-half million citizens of the United States west of the Rocky Mountains, not taking into count the Chinese or the Indians. Still between the new West and the older civilization stretched mile upon mile of unconquered territory, whose physical contour held out as many perils to the adventurer as the possibility of encounters with murderous Indians. Three thoroughfares opened across this wilderness—the Santa Fe Trail to the south, the Salt Lake (or Central) Route, and the Oregon Trail on the north. Stage lines had been established over these trails, emigrant trains, westward bound, continually braved the hazards they presented and freighting trains belted the distance. Fully 42,000 emigrants crossed the plains in 1849, and at top notch, one big pioneer freighting firm of the West, Russell, Majors & Waddell, employed 6,250 big wagons and 75,000 oxen in carting supplies and provisions across the continent. Still travel was cumbersome and the transmittal of news was uncertain and slow. Utah was created a territory in September 1850, but the news, conveyed by boat to San Francisco, thence by private messenger to Salt Lake City, was not received until January, 1851.

The impetuosity of the emigrant population of the West acknowledged no barriers to rapid growth and quite early in history, dissatisfaction with conditions raised the question of better means of communication between East and West.

There was an old joke current in those days that a California senator's term might run out while he was en route to the Columbia to take up his last business. The joke was not without foundation. A California senator who in 1850 had been elected to the United States Senate, had to travel by stage to reach the capital. The transportation was so slow that he was unable to perform his duties as a true legislator.

